



William & Mary Arts & Sciences

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Diversity/Inclusion Mission Statement and Action Plan

Diversity Mission Statement and Objectives

The faculty, staff and students of the English Department value diversity highly and believe that an inclusive curriculum, diverse faculty and student body, and welcoming climate, are critical to academic excellence and a well-rounded education. We support the exploration of literature in English from a range of historical periods, social and cultural contexts, and geographical areas; and from diverse authors and cultures. Many of our faculty are jointly appointed in interdisciplinary programs whose focus is diversity and inclusion, and a number of our courses are routinely cross-listed in such programs.

The English Department defines diversity as encompassing differences in age, cultural identity, language background, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, faith, neurological make up (neurodiversity), geographic background, political and ideological perspectives, disability status, race, sexuality, social and economic status, and veteran status. We welcome individuals, perspectives, and ideas that reflect the heterogeneity of the United States and the world.

Diversity Action Plan

This plan was initially drafted in November 2017 by the Ad Hoc Diversity Committee in the English Department, appointed by the Chair in Fall 2017. Members of the committee were the Chair (Suzanne Raitt), Associate Chair (Arthur Knight), faculty members Jenny Putzi and Liz Losh, and staff member Jeanne Smith. Subsequently, the draft plan was discussed by the English Department Personnel Committee, and the English Department Undergraduate Program Committee. The amended plan was then presented to the English faculty at a department meeting on February 17, 2017 for discussion, and the motion to adopt it as the departmental diversity plan was approved.

Faculty hiring and curricular development

- a. **Long-term hiring strategy:** In December 2016, the Undergraduate Program Committee presented to the Department some ideas about curricular development and future hiring. These ideas were designed, in part, to promote diversification of both the curriculum and the faculty. This emphasis on diversity will continue to shape our curricular and hiring strategy into the future.

- b. **Curriculum development:** In 2016, the English department adopted a new curriculum for the English major which includes a requirement to take a course that carries the “Constructions of Race” attribute. The department will work to increase the number of such courses offered, both through new hires and through mentorship of current faculty.

Climate

- a. **Implicit bias workshops:** In August 2015, the English department held a retreat to which we invited Mekbib Gemed, Vice-President for Diversity and Inclusion at Eastern Virginia Medical School. Mr Gemed conducted an implicit bias workshop with English department faculty. We plan to arrange a similar event every seven years. The next workshop will be in 2022.
- b. **Teaching brownbags:** English department faculty will hold regular informal brownbags on teaching strategies and techniques, to build collegiality in our department among faculty, and also to share our expertise on working with disadvantaged students in our classrooms.
- c. **Student climate survey:** A climate survey was administered to all students enrolled in English, Writing and Creative Writing courses in Fall 2017. The results were analyzed and a report released in January 2019. Results of the survey will inform curricular development, hiring strategies, and faculty development opportunities going forward.
- d. **Diversity Committee** The English Department Diversity Committee was formally established by departmental vote, as a standing committee of the department.

Professional development

- e. **Support for research and conference travel:** In the disbursement of departmental funds for research and conference travel, every effort will be made to support activities related to diversity and inclusion (workshops, conferences, etc).

Outreach

- f. **Support for interdisciplinary programs:** The English department is committed to maintaining its close relationships with interdisciplinary programs, including supporting jointly appointed faculty, MOUs, and cross-listing courses.
- g. **Inclusive language:** The English department will make every effort to ensure that its communications (both internal and external) and its educational activities use inclusive language.
- h. **Talks, speakers and events:** The English department will make every effort to ensure that invited talks (both by members of the department and by external speakers) and other departmental events reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- i. **High school:** The English department will build relationships with local high schools to aid recruitment of local students to the College and to the English major/minor and the CRWR minor.